

On Trust:
A Hard Look at Canadian Senior Officer Relationships
during the Italian Campaign

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

On Trust: A Hard Look at Canadian Senior Officer Relationships during the Italian Campaign, by Lieutenant-Colonel Jim Smith, 55 pages.

Trust and leadership go hand in hand. Trust facilitates risk taking, overcomes emotional resistance, and reinforces existing organizational norms and thus is essential to successful military leadership. This monograph examines the performance of three Canadian general officers during the Italian Campaign of World War II—Hoffmeister, Vokes, and Burns—with each case building on the last. Ending with a study of Burns explores the issues that ultimately led to his demise as a field commander. The study uses Beer's model of change ($D + M + P = C$), with trust added as a lens— $D + M + P + (T) = C$ —to examine their performance as leaders and commanders. Using Beer's model to examine the leadership of these three general officers will demonstrate that trust is the missing component for this model to be an accurate leadership tool when attempting to influence behavior. In addition to the standard secondary sources, an array of journals, after-action reports, and memoirs provide context. Official archive reports offer primary evidence for the ultimate evaluation. The findings are analyzed against current theory and American and Canadian leadership doctrine. This study then provides recommendations for improving how leaders are educated and trained for positions of responsibility and, perhaps, provide a revised definition of trust.

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Introduction

In Canada towards the end of 1942 public opinion, which could, of course, have no authentic knowledge of what plans might be in the moulding for the future employment of Canadian troops, was becoming increasingly vocal through the press and on the rostrum in exerting pressure upon the Government to get its forces into action as soon as possible. Canadian troops had been in the United Kingdom for three years, and except for a single day's bloody action at Dieppe by units of the 2nd Canadian Division had seen no real fighting.

—Gerald Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943–1945*

The 1st Canadian Infantry Division arrived in Britain shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939, and, by spring 1944, had exhausted the contents of its training manuals. Training for a war and submitting oneself to actual battle are two very different things, and the waiting while watching their Allied counterparts participate in the baptism of bloody battle was beginning to take a toll on the morale and motivation of the Canadian Forces. Both the troops and the Canadian general public were restless and anxious to matter in the global conflict that was so profoundly and negatively affecting many of their family members and loved ones. Ultimately, the Canadian Forces joined their imperial counterparts and allies in the conflict against Nazi Germany in 1943, assigned to fight with the British Eighth Army. After spending so much time dwelling in the chilly rain of the British training camps, their arrival in Italy during the summer of 1943 was typical of the region: hot, dusty, and dry. It must have been especially unpleasant and intolerable for the thousands of troops who were accustomed to the nordic climate of Canada. Despite their long period of preparation, the Canadian Army leadership lacked combat experience and thus were not entirely ready for operating in the Allied cause.

The Italian Campaign was one of the most significant Canadian campaigns of World War II. Canadian soldiers served in Italy from 10 July 1943 until spring 1945 and participated in several of the campaign's major battles, including Sicily, Ortona, Monte Cassino, Liri Valley, Florence, the Gothic Line, and the Moro River Campaign (see Figure 1). The 1st Canadian

Infantry Division fought in the Moro River Campaign and the Battle of Ortona in December 1943 as part of British V Corps. The breaking of the Hitler Line in May 1944 occurred in the Liri Valley. In more than a year of combat, the Canadian Army made a good account of themselves.



Figure 1. Canadian Army in Sicily and Mainland Italy, 1943–45

Source: J. P. Johnston, “E.L.M. Burns – A Crisis of Command,” *Canadian Military Journal* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2006).

When Lieutenant General Sir Richard McCreery took over the Eighth Army in October 1944, the I Canadian Corps was relatively successful in various battles, most recently in breaking the Gothic Line and enabling the Allies to gain access to northern Italy.¹ However, McCreery was

¹ J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Alberta, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 140.

aware of the problems stemming from the Canadian Corps commander, Lieutenant General E. L. M. “Tommy” Burns. He noticed the decreased esprit de corps and the frustration between the division commanders and their superior. The Canadian contingent was quickly becoming dysfunctional; efficiency suffered, tension was thick, and everyone from the division commanders to the enlisted men appeared uneasy. McCreery wrote to General Sir Harold Alexander, the commander of the 15th Army Group in Italy, “Burns lacked the attributes of a higher commander . . . his manner is depressing, diffident and unenthusiastic, and he must completely fail to inspire his subordinate commanders.”² These allegations against Burns were investigated, and it became clear that the division commanders working for Burns could not trust him and were just as frustrated with him as Burns’s superior officers.³ Tempers were flaring among the Canadian leadership group. As stated by Major General Christopher Vokes, commander of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, in a not-so-eloquent manner,

Things have reached a crisis here . . . if nothing is done and done quickly Bert [Hoffmeister] and I, plus Pres [Gilbride], Des [Smith], Johnny [Plow], and Collie [Campbell] are prepared to adopt the only course possible. . . . We have continued to bear the cross for an individual who lacks one iota of personality, appreciation of effort or the first goddamn thing in the application of book learning to what is practical in war & what isn’t. I have done my best to be loyal but goddammit the strain has been too bloody great. . . .”⁴

There was anger and great dissatisfaction among the division commanding generals of I Canadian Corps. They had no confidence in their leader and could not trust him. This distrust and disharmony was growing throughout the ranks and had to be reconciled. Much was at stake, and

² McCreery to Alexander, 24 October 1944, Foulkes Papers, 73/1223, series 6, box 225, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

³ Preparations for Departure, Vokes to Penhale, 2 November 1944, M. H. S. Penhale Papers, vol. 1.

⁴ Ibid.

the division commanders feared that the lives of their men were in danger: they called for the replacement of their superior, the I Canadian Corps commander.

Tommy Burns, “Canada’s Intellectual General,”⁵ is “easily the most interesting, complex, and intelligent of the Canadian generals.”⁶ Burns was indeed a very intelligent man who enjoyed training and creating innovative solutions for the problems of the troops of his time. He was well read, a veteran of the Great War, had several battle honors to his credit, and had risen through the ranks after being trained and educated to the highest Canadian standard available in this era. McCreery believed that “Burns was one of the handful of Canadian officers marked for the highest positions of command.”⁷ The trouble with Burns was his inability to inspire and invoke trust within his superiors, as illustrated earlier by McCreery’s comments and, more importantly, by those whom he was to lead into battle. His division commanders were in a mutinous state, and were, as Vokes revealed, “prepared to adopt the only course possible. . . .”⁸ In other words, Burns had all of the training and skills necessary to be a good leader, but his inability to inspire trust eventually led to the demise of his career as a commander. Vokes and his peers, particularly Major General Bertram Hoffmeister, who commanded the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, could not trust their commander.

The perception of trust in the general population is in short supply and has negative effects. According to an Associated Press-GfK (Society for Consumer Research)⁹ poll conducted in

⁵ Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris, eds., *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto, Canada: Dundurn Press, 2001), 143.

⁶ Granatstein, *The Generals*, 116.

⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁸ Preparations for Departure, Vokes to Penhale.

⁹ Connie Cass, *In God We Trust, Maybe, but Not Each Other* (Associated Press, November 30, 2013), accessed March 15, 2015, <http://ap-gfcpoll.com/featured/our-latest-poll->

November 2013, Americans are suspicious of one another in everyday encounters. Only one-third of Americans believe that most people can be trusted, down from half who felt that way in 1972 when the General Social Survey first asked the question. In December 2013, *Forbes* magazine published an analysis of why this lack of trust can be a problem.¹⁰ Although a periodical aimed at the business community, *Forbes*'s exposition and its relevance to the business of military leadership is not hard to extrapolate. It is reasonable to assume that soldiers must have trust in their leaders, in routine activities, and especially in the life-or-death business of war. According to Major General Heidi Brown, director of Test for the Missile Defense Agency, "To be a good leader, you have to trust and, more importantly, others have to trust you."¹¹ Brown defines trust as "The feeling of safety that someone will behave the way you expect" and leadership as "The ability to get others to do things they never thought possible."¹² Teaching effective leadership techniques to enable groups to successfully initiate change could be essential to business and military personnel alike. Trust and leadership go hand in hand.

Michael Beer, the Cahners-Rabb Professor of Business Administration Emeritus at the Harvard Business School, developed an effective model for understanding change: $D + M + P = C$.¹³ Change (C) refers to leading subordinates to perform tasks or responsibilities different from

findings-24.

¹⁰ Glenn Llopis, "7 Reasons Employees Don't Trust Their Leaders," *Forbes* (December 9, 2013), accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/glennllopis/2013/12/09/7-reasons-employees-dont-trust-their-leaders/>.

¹¹ Kari Hawkins, *Leadership in Combat and at Peace Begins with Trust* (US Army, March 27, 2013), accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/99611/Leadership_In_Combat_And_At_Peace_Begins_With_Trust/.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Nagendra V. Chowdary, *Interview with Michael Beer on Change Management* (IBS Case Development Centre, June 2007), accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.ibscdc.org/executive-interviews/Q&A_with_Michael_Beer_6.htm.

what they regularly perform. When leaders draw enough buy-in from subordinates to influence their behavior, change will occur. Beer argues that there must be certain existing factors in the environment to create conditions for change: dissatisfaction (D) of the present status quo, a vision or model (M) of the desired outcome, and a process (P) developed for change.¹⁴ According to Beer, if these three factors are strong enough to overcome personal or organizational resistance, then they will act as a driving force for the desired institutional change. Beer believes that people, in general, are afraid of change. They fear the cost of any modification in the present condition, thus creating anxiety and emotional resistance.¹⁵ Although a useful model, it fails to address the fear and anxiety associated with change. The model is incomplete because it lacks an element that would assist most people in accepting and embracing change. This element, identified in this monograph as trust (T), is essential to provoke change in an organization. Adding the element of trust to the equation— $D + M + P + (T) = C$ —will help others successfully cope with change in a competitive environment. Beer's model is taught to all promising senior officers in the American Army at the Command and General Staff College,¹⁶ graduating approximately 7,000 new leaders per year. However, without trust, it is incomplete.

This monograph will focus on the relationships among I Canadian Corps senior military commanders during the summer and fall of 1944 as a part of the British Eighth Army under command of McCreery. At this point, the Eighth Army had successfully fought through Sicily and was continuing its advance through mainland Italy. Command of I Canadian Corps was

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Michael Beer, *Organization Change and Development: A Systems View* (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear, 1980), 47.

¹⁶ US Army Command and General Staff College, L103 *Advance Sheet* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, April 2014), 1–2.

transferred from Lieutenant Harry Crerar to Burns earlier in the year, and he continued as the corps commander while the Canadians assisted their allies with the task of clearing the Italian countryside of belligerents. Burns had two competent and battle-tested division commanders working for him: Hoffmeister, commanding the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, and Vokes, commanding the 1st Canadian Infantry Division.

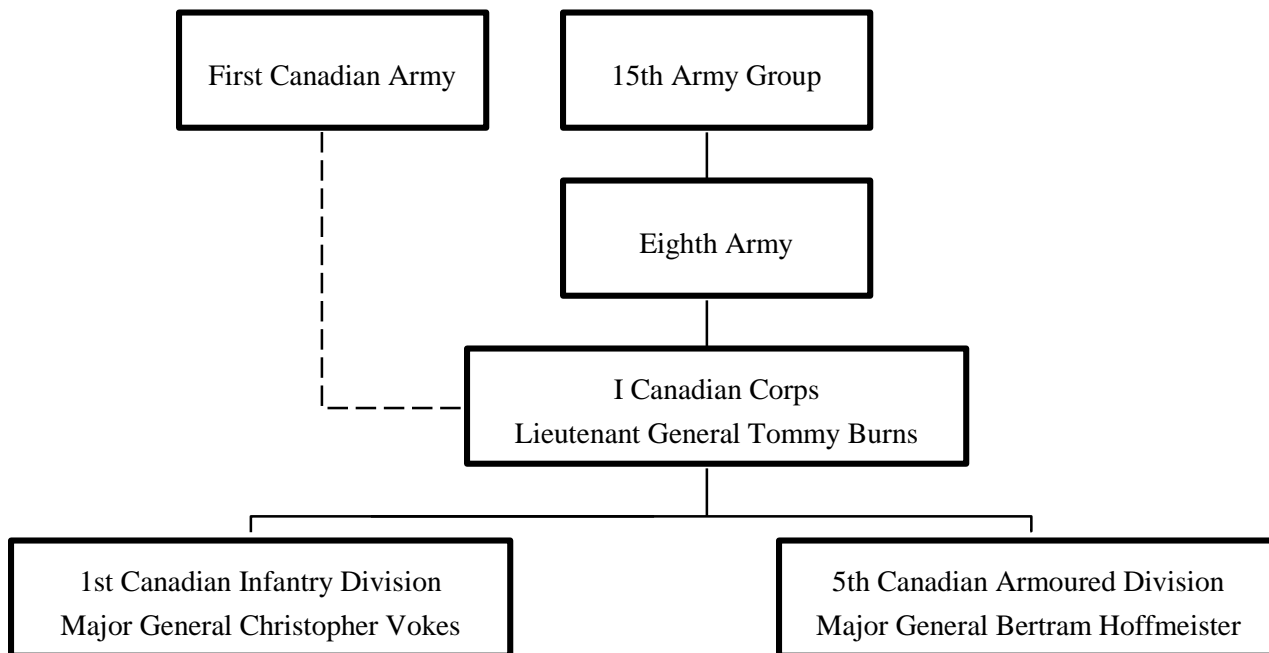
Several works have captured the exploits of the Canadian Army during the Italian Campaign, but few have studied the interpersonal relationships among the senior officers who commanded there (see Figure 2). The works offering the greatest insights into these men include J. L. Granatstein's book, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War*,¹⁷ which captures the issues surrounding Burns and his command period. This book provides insightful background into how other senior officers viewed Burns and offers reasons for his failures as a commander.

Another great Canadian military historian, Douglas Delaney, wrote *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45*,¹⁸ which includes an account of Burns as a corps commander. This work attempts to capture Burns's complete command time and offers other explanations for his failures as a commander. Delaney also authored *The Soldiers' General: Bert Hoffmeister at War*,¹⁹ an excellent history of Hoffmeister's rise through the ranks and first-hand accounts of his successes while commanding the 5th Canadian Armoured Division in Italy. This work delves deeply into the personal relationships and conflicts with which Hoffmeister struggled during his divisional command period.

¹⁷ Granatstein, *The Generals*.

¹⁸ Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Douglas E. Delaney, *The Soldiers' General: Bert Hoffmeister at War* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2005).



15th Army Group Commanders	
General Harold Alexander,	1943 – December 1944
Lieutenant General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst,	December 1944 – July 1945
Eighth Army Commanders	
General Bernard Montgomery,	13 August 1942 – 29 December 1943
Lieutenant General Oliver Leese,	29 December 1943 – 1 October 1944
Lieutenant General Richard McCreery,	1 October 1944 – July 1945
First Canadian Army Commanders	
General Andrew McNaughton,	early 1942 – 21 December 1943
Lieutenant General Kenneth Stuart,	21 December 1943 – 20 March 1944
General Harry Crerar,	20 March 1944 – summer 1945
Lieutenant General Guy Simonds,	28 September 1944 – 7 November 1944

Figure 2. I Canadian Corps Organizational Command Structure

Operational Command

Source: Created by author.

Along with these historical works, Burns's autobiography, *General Mud: Memoirs of*

Two World Wars,²⁰ contains his side of the story and describes in detail how he perceived the events and relationships evolving between himself and his superiors during the Italian Campaign. Vokes also wrote a candid and honest account of his division command time in his autobiography, *Vokes, My Story*.²¹ Required to understand the crux of these diverse interpersonal relationships was information found in the National Archives of Canada, the Canadian database of all facts and figures, personal correspondence, first-hand notes, and recordings during the Italian Campaign and other conflicts involving Canadian and dominion combatants.²² The accounts provided contain the stories relating to trust between officers and the risks taken because of that trust. These stories and letters show that there was little training for these great generals with respect to *how* to influence troops to fulfill their duties.

The state of military leadership today could be improved if leaders were taught the importance of trust, as well as the essential elements they must provide their subordinates in order to gain their trust.²³ Adding the element of trust to Beer's model can enhance what future military commanders learn today at leadership schools. Having trust in a superior officer can help soldiers cope with and accept unpleasant changes and factors within their environment. In a military setting, where soldiers must trust their leaders in matters of life or death, this seems imperative for mission success and the very survival of soldiers. Burns had all of the elements of Beer's

²⁰ E. L. M. Burns, *General Mud: Memoirs of Two World Wars* (Toronto, Canada: Clarke, Irwin, 1970).

²¹ Christopher Vokes, with John Philip Maclean, *Vokes, My Story* (Ottawa, Canada: Gallery Books, 1985).

²² Government of Canada, *Library and Archives Canada* (March 28, 2012), accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/about-us/Pages/our-mandate.aspx>.

²³ The Command and General Staff College leadership training core curriculum comprises L100 and L200. The 2014–2015 academic year curriculum summary of learning objectives contained in the advance sheets and teachings do not cover trust. Kotter's and Beer's models are the two methods used to instruct organizational leadership.

model at his disposal; the missing element in his leadership style—trust—could explain his demise as a commander. Trust can also be a factor for motivating soldiers with regard to *how* orders are followed; tasks can be completed with minimal effort, or with great energy, commitment, and purpose depending on the subordinate's trust in and motivation to follow the leader during the task. Effective change and successful end states are coveted and required by military commanders, and proposing that a trustworthy commander will achieve better results from his or her followers, as opposed to an individual who does not seem trustworthy to subordinates, is realistic. Soldiers are not robots—their needs, complex desires, fears, and other factors motivate them to perform. Trust is an essential element in motivation. Soldiers are called on at any moment to carry out their superiors' orders. Although soldiers are legally bound to follow orders, if the person delivering them is a trusted leader, the likelihood of commitment via compliance increases the desired outcome. Subordinates will be less anxious and afraid to sacrifice for the greater goal, as well, if they trust their leader. The main focus of any career officer is to be an effective leader and accomplish the tasks required by superiors. This begs an important question: Is trust an essential element of successful military leadership?

This monograph examines the performance of three Canadian general officers during the Italian Campaign of World War II—Hoffmeister, Vokes, and Burns—with each case building on the last. Ending with a study of Burns will explore the issues that ultimately led to his demise as a field commander. The study will use Beer's model, with trust added as a lens— $D + M + P + (T) = C$ —to explore their performance as leaders and commanders. In addition to the standard secondary sources, an array of journals, after-action reports, and memoirs will provide context. Official archive reports will offer primary evidence for the ultimate evaluation. The findings will be analyzed against current theory and American and Canadian leadership doctrine. This study will then provide recommendations for improving how leaders are educated and trained for positions of responsibility and, perhaps, provide a revised definition of trust.

When examining leadership styles, successes and failures from a historical perspective can offer valuable insight for leadership training today. In the example provided at the beginning of this monograph, Burns's subordinate division commanders deemed him untrustworthy, which led to plans of a type of mutiny. By examining the performances of Hoffmeister, Vokes, and Burns during the Italian Campaign of World War II, this monograph will argue that trust is an essential element of successful military leadership. Using Beer's model as a lens to examine the leadership of these three general officers will demonstrate that trust is the missing component for this model to be an accurate leadership tool when attempting to influence behavior. Thus, it will become clear that the element of trust is essential to successful military leadership as it facilitates risk taking, overcomes emotional resistance, and reinforces existing organizational norms.

Major General Bertram Hoffmeister

Bert Hoffmeister was Canada's best fighting commander of the Second World War.

—Douglas Delaney, *The Soldiers' General*

Major General Bertram Hoffmeister is considered a successful general officer. Much decorated, respected, and loyal, he was an exceptional example for subordinates to follow. The key to his success is summed up nicely in Delaney's final chapter of *The Soldiers' General*:

Hoffmeister's genuine desire to save lives, not surprisingly, went over well with his subordinates. It was part of his character. . . . Failure could be devastating to morale, so, like Montgomery, Hoffmeister tried to give them successes. . . . In short, his subordinates trusted that he had their welfare at heart, and that, in turn, made them want to work for him.²⁴

He acquired his valuable people skills from many sources, starting with his parents, educators, and employers at a young age.

The above statement is one man's opinion, but it sums up most of the history that is written about Hoffmeister. Born in 1907 to a mid- to low-income family in Vancouver, he grew up with his older sister and doting mother in a happy home. He received a public school education and, due to his father's ill health, entered the workforce while in his teens as a laborer for a lumber company to help to support his family.²⁵ While still working, Hoffmeister entered the Canadian military as a cadet in the corps of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada at the age of 12 and was commissioned to the militia in October 1927. He left his civilian job at the lumber mill on 10 September 1939 to join active service at the start of World War II, departing from Canada four months later.²⁶ Hoffmeister had received very little formal military training and was overwhelmed and frustrated with the amount of responsibility he was first given. He was

²⁴ Delaney, *The Soldiers' General*, 231.

²⁵ Ibid., 10.

²⁶ Ibid., 17–19.

accountable for the lives and welfare of the men of the Seaforths; they and their families were well known to him. He was afraid of making mistakes that could cost lives. "In December 1939, the newly promoted Major Hoffmeister was not prepared for war, and he knew it."²⁷ As a part-time militia officer, there were many things he had not yet been exposed to as had his regular force peers. Upon his arrival in Britain, he expected to learn all that was needed for a commander to lead fighting troops. However, this was not the case. By 1941, he had received two years of training but still felt unprepared to lead his troops into battle. He had a nervous crisis and spent a few weeks in the hospital, where he came to terms with his lack of confidence and learned how to handle the large amounts of stress he felt. "I had a nervous breakdown. The anxiety of having responsibility for a hundred men, responsible for their lives, taking them into battle, and not having the necessary training to ensure I would do a satisfactory job."²⁸ Training with the regular force officers was helpful for Hoffmeister, and his confidence grew as he completed Staff College in 1942, where he learned valuable lessons such as advanced tactics, logistics, and planning. As the commanding officer, Hoffmeister led his troops into their first battlefield test on 9 July 1943 as the Seaforth Highlanders participated in Operation Husky, the Allied landing and invasion of Sicily. From this point, Hoffmeister grew to be an exceptional battlefield commander and was promoted to command the 5th Canadian Armoured Division within six months of landing in Sicily.²⁹

Dissatisfaction (D) was clearly in evidence within the ranks of the 5th Canadian

²⁷ Hoffmeister was promoted to the rank of major on 24 October 1939. The promotion was retroactive to 2 September 1939. National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 15253, WD, SHC, October 1939, Appendix 1, Battalion Order no. 38, 25 October 1939.

²⁸ Campbell-Hoffmeister Interview, 1993, MacLeod Collection, Langley, British Columbia, Canada.

²⁹ Delaney, *The Soldiers' General*, 119.

Armoured Division, which set the necessary conditions for Hoffmeister to generate change. By this time, the world had been at war for nearly five years. Allied forces were fighting to regain control over many parts of Europe, which were held by the Nazi regime. As per Beer's model, pressure leads to dissatisfaction and change. As well, crisis provides the motivation to change.³⁰ Crises were abundant during the late phases of World War II; there were very few families who were untouched by the tragedy of loss due to battlefield deaths, civilian bombings, food and fuel shortages, and uncertainty of the future. Soldiers willingly volunteered to defend themselves and their families and friends from continued suffering and threat. Hoffmeister's contributions as commander of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division while attempting to drive out the Axis forces during the Italian Campaign represent both his and his troops' unwillingness to accept the tyranny created by Germany, thus fueling the need for change. During this time, dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the present state can be rated as high.

An insightful and clever officer, Hoffmeister had a clear sense of where the division needed to go and was successful in articulating this vision, or model (M), to subordinates. As commander of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, his goal was to develop his troops and officers into a ready and lethal fighting force.³¹ He shared this vision by developing respect and encouraging open communication among his staff to ensure that everyone understood and had a stake in the vision. He was inexperienced as a division commander, and, with a background in infantry, knew little about commanding an armoured division. As he stated to one of his armoured brigade officers, Gen J. D. B. Smith, "Des, I know bugger all about armour and I'm going to depend on you."³² He quickly earned the admiration of his subordinates by honestly and

³⁰ Beer, *Organization Change and Development*, 47.

³¹ Delaney, *The Soldiers' General*, 122.

³² Notes on Interview with MGen J. Desmond B. Smith, London, UK, 14 September

respectfully empowering them; he did not force his authority or employ autocratic leadership styles. He knew they all had to work together quickly and efficiently to build an effective team, and this knowledge allowed him to avoid potential bitterness and bruised pride.

Hoffmeister also provided examples of bravery and team building that served to further communicate the intended vision. During his first day as the division commander, he joined the lead infantry companies during a live fire exercise and put himself precariously close to the artillery targets: “. . . everybody knew that the new GOC really knew what he was doing and was not afraid to show the boys how to do it regardless of the danger. I really think that that one episode in that little series of exercises had a fantastic effect on the division.”³³ Soldiers and officers alike were impressed with their leader and “bought in” to his vision for the division as an effective fighting force.

Another part of Hoffmeister’s vision was to encourage esprit de corps and high morale among his division. Aside from being an active participant in training exercises, he also spent much of his time visiting the various units and speaking with the officers and soldiers.³⁴ He made sure he was briefed on each unit’s pressing issues, listened to any concerns they had, and tried to remain a good example and leader by showing his followers what to do. One soldier who worked for him remarked, “There was something about the look on his face, his physical appearance, and the air of confidence he carried with him at all times that told me as it told all of the others that we had a winner here.”³⁵ Hoffmeister made a positive impression on this young soldier, as well as

1991, J. L. Granatstein Fonds, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

³³ McAndrew-Wrinch Interview, 1980, McAndrew Collection, Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada.

³⁴ See National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 13796, WD “G” 5 CAD, March 1944.

³⁵ Stanley Scislowski to Dr. McAndrew, 7 March 1981, McAndrew Collection, Royal

many others. His goal to boost the 5th Canadian Armoured Division soldiers' morale was successful.

A keen learner and observer, Hoffmeister acquired a mastery for process (P), or planning, early in his life and readily applied this to the military context. A good leader can achieve results partly through developing and executing a solid plan and process. Hoffmeister was a reserve officer, which meant that he did not have the training the full-time officers received. However, his early years working for a large business prepared him well. Reflecting on his time at the lumber company, Hoffmeister realized the parallels between the business world and commanding troops for the Army: "The ordinary citizen who is planning a business transaction goes through much the same steps as the commander in the field who is planning an Operation."³⁶ His planning abilities were tested during his tenure as the 5th Canadian Armoured Division commander. Prior to the battles in the Liri Valley, Hoffmeister realized his division required some additional training. The last battle fought by the 5th Canadian Armoured Division near the Arielli River earlier that year was demoralizing and unsuccessful; unfamiliarity among infantry, armour, and artillery was to blame.³⁷ Driven to improve, Hoffmeister supervised a TEWT (tactical exercise without troops), where officers from tank squadrons and infantry companies collaborated with representatives from the supporting artillery regiments to plan attacks and then test those attacks on live fire exercises.³⁸ After this training, he organized a two-day division training exercise called THRUSTER, which required all infantry, armoured, artillery, and support trades to work

Military College, Kingston, Canada.

³⁶ War Office, *Field Service Regulations Vol. II Operations – General 1935* (Ottawa, Canada: King's Printer, 1939), 23.

³⁷ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 13796, WD "G" 5 CAD, March 1944, Appendix 9, 5 CDN ARM DIV TRG INSTR no. 25, 12 March 1944.

³⁸ Ibid.

together and share information effectively.³⁹ Although this training was deemed too short, it was successful because it provided awareness of and cooperation among the various battlefield entities. It also boosted morale after the losses near the Arielli. Hoffmeister concluded at the end of the exercise, “The punch, the clout this division had, was just tremendous, and no person, private soldier, NCO, or officer could fail to be impressed by this.”⁴⁰ Revealing the plan, and how powerful the 5th Canadian Armoured Division had become, allowed the division ranks to believe in their commander.

Always driven to improve, Hoffmeister never stopped analyzing and repairing the planning and processes of his division. After the battle for the Liri Valley, he held a conference attended by brigade commanders and key staff at which he outlined “future intentions and training policy” and directed the attendees “to have written reports of the parts played by their formations on recent operations.”⁴¹ He knew his division must engage the enemy again in the near future, and he wanted to ensure that he positively adjusted his planning and processes to achieve results. Tasks were generated by the Eighth Army staff and headquarters, of which the 5th Canadian Armoured Division was just one part. When it came time to develop a plan, “Hoffmeister emulated many of the senior British officers under whom he served.”⁴² This included a bottom-up approach, where commanders obtained well-considered analyses from their subordinates for each stage of a given operation, ensuring a thorough and proper examination of

³⁹ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 14056, WD “G” 5 CAD, April 1944, Appendix 8, Exercise “THRUSTER,” 3 April 1944.

⁴⁰ Typescript of an Interview by McAndrew and Greenhouse with Bert Hoffmeister, 1980, McAndrew Collection, Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada, 80.

⁴¹ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 13796, WD “G” 5 CAD, 1 June 1944.

⁴² Delaney, *The Soldiers’ General*, 176.

the tactical problem.⁴³ The superior staff would then confirm that each brigade and division had the support required for a successful outcome. This gave everyone a stake in the plan, and Hoffmeister appropriately named this method “great mutual confidence.”⁴⁴ He had refined his people skills and had the ability to motivate his division with the help of a well-thought-out plan for each task. It is evident from these examples that Hoffmeister was very successful at developing processes for change.

Hoffmeister’s command provides examples of dissatisfaction, vision, and planning as per Beer’s model. These factors helped motivate the troops to willingly follow him, but trust (T) is the element at which he excelled, providing the impetus for achieving his desired results. He gained trust through open communication, honesty, and demonstrating concern and care for the welfare of the men under his command. There are many references recorded by both subordinates and peers that indicate Hoffmeister was a trustworthy individual. He showed this trait throughout his wartime career as a commander. For example, during his time as the battalion commander of the Seaforths, prior to the battalion landing in Sicily (which was their first time in combat), he briefed every one of his troops, officers, and enlisted men together so that everyone knew what was going to happen. This was unusual practice as he did not use the chain of command. “The briefing took the form of a complete picture of the enemy situation . . . after which I carried on outlining the broad plan and the details of the brigade and battalion plans.”⁴⁵ He understood that knowledge would empower the soldiers under his command and that they would appreciate his honesty. He also realized that the soldiers needed to have faith in him in order to perform to the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hoffmeister to McAndrew, 30 July 1986, McAndrew Collection, Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada.

⁴⁵ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 15256, WD SHC, 29 June 1943.

best of their abilities. “I was a believer in the troops getting to know me well, hoping they would develop some confidence in me and I felt it was important to do this. . . . Officers, NCOs and other ranks were allowed to ask questions.”⁴⁶ After this briefing, it was clear that the troops trusted in and were confident that their leader would do his utmost to ensure their safety. One soldier, Sergeant Dennis Meade, stated that he “[b]elieved they would not be exposed to any unnecessary risk. . . . I thought we were well led. It all filtered through him.”⁴⁷ Hoffmeister’s words and actions comforted and gave confidence to the men who depended on him.

In addition, the troops knew that Hoffmeister was genuinely concerned for their welfare and that they could trust him to look after them if they were injured or hurt. He often visited the hospitals to speak with and encourage his wounded soliders. One particular episode chronicled this care and concern, which solidified the trust he had earned from his troops: “They still had the original blood from their wounds on their faces and hands.”⁴⁸ Hoffmeister knew that a wounded soldier “. . . needed to be washed, spoken to, and reassured . . . that was clearly beyond the capabilities of the overburdened medical staff.”⁴⁹ Hoffmeister used his influence to resource additional help for the understaffed and struggling hospitals. “The next day, a contingent of British Nursing sisters arrived . . . they helped to an extent that would have been impossible to measure.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Typescript of an Interview by McAndrew and Greenhouse with Bert Hoffmeister, 43.

⁴⁷ Sergeant Dennis Meade, MM, interview with D. Delaney, 5 December 2000, Vancouver, British Columbia.

⁴⁸ The details of this visit, based on an interview with Hoffmeister, are recounted in Mark Zuehlke, *Ortona: Canada’s Epic World War II Battle* (Vancouver, Canada: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999), 290–91.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

As a division commander, Hoffmeister remained concerned about his troops and continued to show that he could be trusted to have their best interests at heart. In May 1944, before the drive to break the Hitler Line, the 5th Canadian Armoured Division was in reserve, regrouping and training. Hoffmeister was scheduled for some leave time but went to great lengths to speak to all of his troops beforehand to ensure that they were informed about upcoming events and to reaffirm their confidence in him. As per official historical records,

It is Gen Hoffmeister's practice not to keep troops standing in the sun during these talks but to break them off and have them seat themselves comfortably in the shade, himself standing in the centre of the group talking to them in the friendliest and most informal manner. The gist of most of these talks was an expression of appreciation for the loyal cooperation of all ranks in the operation.⁵¹

The fact that he cared enough about the troops' comfort during his briefings speaks volumes about his ability to understand and cater to basic human needs. These troops respected their commander for this and trusted that he had their welfare at the forefront at all times.

Hoffmeister was successful in achieving results, or change (C), in all tasks that were assigned to him during the Italian Campaign in 1944. His leadership potential was recognized by his superior officers, and he was quickly promoted and given more responsibility. "Success in battle propelled Hoffmeister from battalion to division command in six short months."⁵² He was promoted very quickly and continued to enjoy success commanding the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. As a division commander, he led his men through the Hitler Line and across the Melfa River.⁵³ He was awarded a second bar for his Distinguished Service Order. The citation reads,

As Commander of an Armoured Division which had never before been in action as a whole, [Hoffmeister] led it with greatest determination and success. By his constant

⁵¹ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 10927, Summary of Ops 5 Cdn Armd Div, 6 July 1944.

⁵² Delaney, *The Soldiers' General*, 119.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 152.

presence in forward areas under shell and small arms fire, he inspired confidence and a fine offensive spirit in all. Between 24 and 30 May, the Division broke out of the Hitler Line, forced the crossings of the MELFA and LIRI rivers, captured 3 villages, destroyed large quantities of enemy equipment, took many prisoners and advanced 35 kilometres.⁵⁴

Hoffmeister led his division well and was a great example for all division leaders to follow.

The 5th Canadian Armoured Division continued to push through and drive out the German forces from Italy. After his last successful operation in the Italian theater, in northern Italy near Raveenna,⁵⁵ Hoffmeister received a letter from the Eighth Army commander, Lieutenant General Sir Richard McCreery, that reinforced his success during this campaign: "I was delighted that your Division finished up in this country with such a successful operation in January, when you commanded the Division with great skill. It was very satisfactory that you were able to use tanks in mid-winter in such unpromising country."⁵⁶ McCreery was pleased with the 5th Canadian Armoured Division and the successful battles and tasks they completed under Hoffmeister's command.

A part-time soldier, Hoffmeister is unique to this study as he is the only reserve force division commander. Being a militia member, he did not enter into the war for the same reasons as Vokes or Burns. The motivation fueling his dissatisfaction (D) was the need to do his part to fight the Axis powers as they threatened the way of life enjoyed by himself, his family, and his fellow Canadian citizens. He went to war generally unprepared but was confident enough to overcome his inadequate training prior to his time as a division commander. Hoffmeister had great vision, or model (M), which inspired his troops to follow him, and this was one of his

⁵⁴ Second Bar to the Distinguished Service Order, Major-General B. M. Hoffmeister, Bertram Meryl Hoffmeister Collection, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

⁵⁵ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, vol. 13798, WD "G" 5 CAD, 6 January 1945.

⁵⁶ Lieut-General Sir Richard McCreery to Major-General B. M. Hoffmeister, 16 February 1945, Bertram Meryl Hoffmeister Collection, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

strengths. He understood his role, wanted to ensure morale was high in the units he commanded, and was a gifted communicator. His process (P) was likely the weakest part of his ability as a leader as he had not received the necessary formal training for his job. Most of his learning took the form of on-the-job training, and he tried his very best with the knowledge he had. Trust (T) was arguably his greatest strength. Numerous quotes and stories illustrate the great trust that troops, peers, and superiors had in Hoffmeister. Using this impetus of trust, any shortfalls he may have demonstrated were minimal and overlooked. What he lacked as a planner was overcome by his trustworthiness and people skills. Hoffmeister's division command time as viewed through the lens of Beer's model indicates that the model lacks the element of trust. This would explain how Hoffmeister achieved change (C) with such success without the ability to plan his tactics well.

Major General Christopher Vokes

[Vokes was] A rough-talking, hard-drinking womanizer; soldiers who admired those traits thought highly of him.

—J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals*

Major General Christopher Vokes was a Canadian general of some notoriety but not always for the right reasons. He was a bit rough around the edges, but despite this the troops believed in and trusted him enough to follow him into many theaters of war. A respected historian who interviewed many of Vokes's contemporaries remarked, “. . . Chris Vokes . . . had less academic brilliance but more leadership potential, more of the ability to make officers and soldiers follow them and carry out their bidding.”⁵⁷ Vokes was a true leader of men, a charismatic figure who had the ability to influence his peers and subordinates. He learned to lead men at a young age and was given the opportunity to develop and learn the intricacies of leadership as a full-time career officer in the Canadian Forces.

Vokes was born in Armagh, Ireland, on 13 April 1904. He came from a military family, and his father was seconded to the Canadian Army in 1910 as an instructor at the Royal Military College, prompting the Vokes family to immigrate to Canada. As a boy, Vokes attended public school in Kingston, Ontario, and followed in his father's footsteps as he entered the college as a cadet at the age of seventeen.⁵⁸ These formative years shaped the man that Vokes would become, and he learned some invaluable life lessons. He states in his memoirs that the greatest thing he learned at the college was “I would not be brutal but always administer discipline with a certain amount of humility and humanity . . . the second greatest thing I learned was self-discipline and

⁵⁷ Granatstein, *The Generals*, 145.

⁵⁸ Vokes, *Vokes, My Story*, 14.

that is essential to everyone.”⁵⁹ He continued his career as a professional soldier and proceeded to England in 1934 to attend the British Army Staff College, learning the basics of commanding soldiers in war. Upon returning to Canada in 1936, he served on the Army staff and worked on the mobilization plans to bring the Canadian Army to Europe to join the Allies. In December 1939, he was posted to England in an operational position with the 1st Canadian Infantry Division as the General Staff Officer, 1st class.⁶⁰ Vokes worked hard to earn a leadership position and was given command of the 2nd Brigade in the 1st Canadian Infantry Division in May 1942.⁶¹ His brigade went on to train until activated for the invasion of Sicily on 10 July 1943. They fought successfully in Sicily and advanced through mainland Italy starting on 3 September 1943. He led the 2nd Brigade until 1 November 1943 when he was given command of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division.⁶² He commanded his division through May 1944 and was a part of the Allied force that broke through the heavily fortified Hitler Line.⁶³ This was the main push toward Rome and it was the most heavily fortified German Front.

Dissatisfaction (D) was undoubtedly demonstrated within the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, and as the division commander, it was up to Vokes to create change. Soldiers were tired, ill, wounded, and homesick. There were many crises reported to the Canadian public about the progression of the Italian Campaign in and around Ortona. When questioned by a reporter about the slow progress of his division, Vokes answered, “For two very good reasons . . . the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁶¹ Ibid., 73.

⁶² Ibid., 140.

⁶³ Ibid., 157.

Germans and the mud.”⁶⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Company reporter Matthew Halton reported back to Canada, “The time has come when the Germans have to stop the Eighth in its tracks or leave the road open to Rome. They are trying to stop us and are fighting hard.”⁶⁵ The Allied forces in the Eighth Army were labourously forcing out the German Army through Italy, and there was immense pressure on Vokes from the Army commander, General Montgomery, to push forward and clear the way to Rome. The Canadian liaison officer, Major Richard S. Malone, was sent from Army headquarters with a message from the commander: “Old Monty wants to know what the problem is, why you are getting along so slowly. . . .”⁶⁶ Vokes had all of the elements of dissatisfaction surrounding him: pressure, crises, and feedback requesting change.

Vokes had a comprehensible goal during his time as a division commander, and he was able to effectively convey this vision, or model (M), to his troops. He preferred to relay his messages personally, at the dangerous edge of the battle where he could deliver his orders simply for his soldiers, all the while showing them his courage and belief in their abilities. Vokes noted, “I spent most of my time forward, at the front lines.”⁶⁷ He depended on the well-trained individuals around him to help communicate his goals. He had an uncanny ability to seek out and surround himself with soldiers and officers who would work well both with him and with one another, as well as understand his intentions and vision. When looking for his aide-de-camp in Italy, Vokes “ . . . realized quickly I’d have to find someone who came from my old school . . . who had learned that sulking would not do regardless of apparent provocation and who, in fact,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁵ Matthew Halton, CBC Radio Broadcast, 15 December 1943, CBC Radio Archives.

⁶⁶ Vokes, *Vokes, My Story*, 141.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 102.

had had his sulking and pouting inclinations quite permanently removed.”⁶⁸ He envisioned a hardworking, functional team, one that could work together to ensure that each task was completed. It was also important to him that his soldiers had the right training, and he corrected any errors in a timely manner. A subordinate to Vokes remembered that “Vokes did not let faults pass. He was more than willing to make an organization do a task over if he thought it had been blundered the first time, and did so frequently with company and battalion commanders.”⁶⁹ Vokes had a clear vision for the future but was reluctant to incorporate new things and allow for flexibility and initiative in his subordinates until he was satisfied that they had mastered the basics.

As a professional and lifelong Army officer, Vokes had been taught countless lessons on planning and the operational process (P) regarding fighting forces. However, there are many indications that this was not Vokes’s personal strength. Montgomery, one of Vokes’s superior officers, described Vokes’s abilities as a planner using the words “a good plain cook.”⁷⁰ Montgomery did not feel that Vokes had any significant talent in this capacity, and there are no references of praise for Vokes in this area. Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese, commander of the Eighth Army, said that Vokes “did very well, with a little direction and the occasional prod.”⁷¹ These words were mentioned when the 1st Canadian Infantry Division was in reserve and refer to the battle for the Liri Valley, which was successful but costly for the division. At the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁹ Personal Diaries, Memoirs, Interviews, and Accounts of Battle, Narrative of J. D. Pierce, Archives of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, box 998.135.118, Ch. 4, 47.

⁷⁰ National Archives of Canada, MG 30, E 157, Crerar Papers, vol. 2, Montgomery to Crerar, 21 December 1943.

⁷¹ Letters to MGen J. N. Kennedy, Leese to Kennedy, 8 June 1944, Leese Papers, box 4, Imperial War Museums, London.

time, Vokes's division was regrouping, assessing the Liri Valley operations and attempting to fix any problems they could before the next offensive operation.

Though not a strong military planner, Vokes clearly displayed other strengths; namely, as a trainer and motivator. It was Hoffmeister's opinion that Vokes's strength lay in troop training.⁷² He planned and personally supervised the training of his troops and always gave them feedback to help them improve. It is also apparent in Vokes's leadership style that he preferred a bottom-up approach to planning, where all members of the team would provide input into the planning process. "Canadian generals, with the exception of Vokes . . . tended towards a more top-down approach."⁷³ He did not believe in an autocratic type of leadership; rather, he ensured that his subordinates understood his vision for the desired end state but let them add information when planning the method of attack. Another of Vokes's strengths in the planning process was his ability to motivate his troops and followers. Don Smith, a young lieutenant of the Carleton and York Regiment, recalls how Vokes was especially popular with the troops. He would speak to them before an upcoming battle with short, clear orders and always end his brief address with the same words: "Go in there and kick 'em in the crotch!" It was a line the men loved.⁷⁴ Vokes was known to be gruff and uncouth, but he was able to motivate and communicate with his troops in a way that resonated with them.

Vokes's actions demonstrated that he had earned the trust (T) of his peers and the soldiers under his command. He accomplished this by caring for his men, relying on his combat experience, and using the trust placed in him by his superior officers. He was genuinely

⁷² Typescript of an Interview by McAndrew and Greenhouse with Bert Hoffmeister, 37.

⁷³ Notes on Interview with General Bert Hoffmeister, Vancouver, 2 March 1992, J. L. Granatstein Fonds, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

⁷⁴ Don Smith, correspondence with Mark Zuehlke, August 1998.

concerned for the welfare of his troops, and they appreciated him for this. He exercised good judgment when it came to knowing his troops; he responded to their needs and understood when they needed a break. For example, there came a point after the battle for Ortona, which ended in January 1944, when Vokes decided that his division was broken and needed rest and recovery. “His division, owing to the loss of leaders, casualties, no specialists and the high sickness rate, has made it desirable for the division to go right out of the line and retrain . . . was temporarily unfitted for offensive operations.”⁷⁵ The soldiers were brought to the reserve lines and given an opportunity to rest and recover.

Another reason Vokes’s subordinates felt comfortable in and confident of his leadership was due to his extensive combat experience. He was one of the rare Canadian commanders to have held the job of division commander for a long period of time: 1 November 1943 until 16 November 1944. He successfully led his troops through many missions and operations, allowing him to develop trust in his relationships with his subordinates and peers. Field Marshal Montgomery remarked, “Battle experience in the Eighth Army was deemed to be the key to everything. . . .”⁷⁶ Vokes used his experience to hide his shortcomings and showed his soldiers that he was worthy of their followership.

As a brigade commander, Hoffmeister enjoyed a trustworthy and confident relationship with Vokes when he was the superior officer commanding the 1st Canadian Infantry Division. Because there was trust and confidence in the relationship between Vokes and Hoffmeister, there was much latitude for judgment in the execution phase of Hoffmeister’s assigned tasks. Vokes did not micromanage or infringe with his opinion about how an operation should unfold. Instead,

⁷⁵ Personal Diaries, Memoirs, Interviews, and Accounts of Battle, Vokes, Moro Account, Archives of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada.

⁷⁶ Montgomery to Crerar, 9 January 1943, DND, vol. 10651, file 215C1.019.

he gave an idea of the desired end state and trusted Hoffmeister to follow through with a plan of his own. Hoffmeister declared, “I was given my objectives and how I got there was strictly up to me.”⁷⁷ Trust is a two-way street, and it ensured efficient and effective functioning of this division of soldiers when senior commanders could rely on and have confidence in one another.

Vokes demonstrated his ability to produce results, or change (C), as a division commander by successfully completing the tasks assigned to him by Leese. Vokes commanded the 1st Canadian Infantry Division as it broke through the infamous Hitler Line, which enabled the Allies a passage to Rome. Although he has been unfavourably described by some soldiers as “A tough old bird, great boxer, tall, wide, and built like a bulldog, which also summed up his personality perfectly,”⁷⁸ Vokes accomplished many successes throughout the Italian Campaign and received many accolades, including a Distinguished Service Order and Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by Leese after breaching the Hitler Line.

Vokes successfully used his own skills as well as the trust and abilities of his subordinates to accomplish his goals. His dissatisfaction (D) as commander of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division as they struggled to maintain and enforce superiority over German forces was real, frustrated him immensely, and drove him into action. Vokes provided a clear vision and model (M) for his soldiers, which helped his followers to understand the goals he described for them. His planning processes (P) were not considered to be his strength as a commander, but he used the trust and skills of his soldiers and peers to fill the gaps in his ability. Vokes earned the trust (T) of his peers and followers with confident communications, concern for their well-being, and use of his vast combat experience. Regarded through the lens of Beer’s model, Vokes’s division command offers a sound argument that trust is needed in order to create effective change

⁷⁷ Major-General Hoffmeister, interview with R. H. Roy, February 1967.

⁷⁸ Thomas de Faye, interview with Mark Zuelke, Victoria, British Columbia, 3 November 1998.

(C) and produce results. Without trust, Vokes would not have overcome his deficiencies in planning and processes—and this model would not be accurate—as he *did* create effective change, which led to successful results.

Lieutenant General E. L. M. (Tommy) Burns

Tommy Burns was easily the most interesting, complex, and intelligent of the Canadian generals. . . .

—J. L. Granatstein, *The Generals*

Lieutenant General E. L. M. (Tommy) Burns was a clever, creative, well-educated, and professional military soldier. He had all of the advantages in his younger years with respect to training, experience, and success. There are, however, numerous less-than-favourable written accounts about his personality. Although he was given all of the tools for successful senior command, he failed during his time as the I Canadian Corps commander because of a severe inability to relate to people. As stated by one division commander who worked for him, “I was never comfortable in his presence. His manner was shy, introverted and humourless. He seemed most unfriendly and distrustful.”⁷⁹ A complex individual, Burns struggled with human relationships and had difficulty communicating his thoughts. This was an extremely unfortunate circumstance as he had a brilliant mind and appeared to have been afforded all of the privileges life could offer.

Born in Montreal in 1897 into a mid- to upperclass family, Burns had the opportunity to attend exclusive forming schools in Montreal before entering the Royal Military College in 1914. He excelled during his studies at the college, posting the highest scores of all cadets during his time there.⁸⁰ He went overseas to fight in France after taking a commission in the Royal Canadian Engineers in 1916, serving as a signals officer. There he was wounded twice in action and earned a Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry; the citation reads, “In addition to organizing and

⁷⁹ The Adriatic Front – Winter 1944, Gen. Christopher Vokes File, SPC MS FC582.37.18.V6, Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada, 21–22.

⁸⁰ Report, 23 June 1915, Central Registry, Burns File, Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada.

running the signals lines, he personally laid and repaired . . . cables under very heavy fire. He displayed great courage and coolness throughout.”⁸¹ Burns fought and was wounded again at Vimy Ridge but recovered and went on with his brigade to fight at Passchendaele.⁸² Burns was one of the youngest men to reach the rank of Captain, a pinnacle that somewhat intimidated him. He noted,

At the time I took over command of the signals section, I had not reached my nineteenth birthday. In World War I very many subalterns were no older. Civilians perhaps may think that it is not very sensible for a youth of eighteen to be made responsible for the performance and well-being of a group of twenty or thirty men, many of whom would be older than he was.⁸³

Burns survived the Great War and continued to focus on self-improvement. He served as the district engineer at Saint John, New Brunswick, where, along with his regular duties, he began writing articles for various military and civilian magazines, such as *American Mercury* and *Canadian Defense Quarterly*, in order to prepare for higher command posts. He was eager to learn and hoped that being published would earn him some credibility with his peer group.⁸⁴ Burns was selected to attend Staff College in 1928 in Quetta, India, and after was posted to Quebec as the district engineer. He was soon placed in charge of the geographical section—the map-making organization of the Department of Defense. In 1936, as a general staff officer in the Montreal district, Burns trained area Militia members. He attended but did not complete the Imperial Defense College in 1939 as he was called for active duty at the Canadian Military Headquarters in England as a general staff officer. After promotion to full Colonel he was called

⁸¹ Casualty Form Active Service, Burns File, LAC, RG 9, Accession No. 92 – 93/166, E. L. M. Burns.

⁸² Burns, *General Mud*, 53.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

back to Canada in July 1939 as a staff officer for MGen Crerar, Chief of General Staff at the Canadian Military Headquarters.⁸⁵ Burns was promoted to Brigadier General in 1941 and held the appointment of Brigadier General Staff of the Canadian Corps under Gen McNaughton, the Canadian Corps commander. In 1942, as commander of the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, Burns was sent to England to serve with the 4th Canadian Division. There was very little action for him during this time, and he did not take part in any major operations. In 1943, he was appointed as General Officer commanding the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, taking part in the Allied invasion of Sicily.⁸⁶ At the end of March 1944, he was selected as commander of the 1st Canadian Corps, with orders to push northward in Italy and eventually liberate Rome.

The burden of being accountable to generate change within the ranks of Canadian officers and soldiers rested with Burns during the Italian Campaign in 1944. He was the corps commander, the senior ranking Canadian, the leader all troops looked up to and from whom they expected good leadership. Burns was under pressure to produce results from the commander of the Eighth Army, Gen Leese, and the pride of the Canadian troops and its citizens at home was at stake. The 1st Canadian Infantry Division was having difficulty advancing through the Hitler Line, and Leese was not pleased. “General Leese gave me a ‘rocket’ [Army slang for a sharp admonition] because of the slowness of the Corps’ advance. . . .”⁸⁷ The 1st Canadian Corps suffered many casualties during the advance to Rome: “From May 15 to June 4, there had been 789 men killed, 2463 wounded and 116 missing—3368 casualties in all.”⁸⁸ The strain and sense of accountability for these soldiers’ lives sat heavily with Burns, prompting the need for change

⁸⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 120.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 160.

and requiring responsible leadership. All elements of dissatisfaction (D) were evident for Burns: high expectations, crisis, and negative feedback requiring a change from the present status quo.

A well-educated and gifted planner, Burns had a logical goal and vision, or model (M), during his time as a corps commander, but he had great difficulty relating this vision to his troops. He wrote in his memoirs about his overall vision as a commander, “The responsibility which a general cannot escape, in my view, is to strain every nerve to ensure that the action is planned and prepared to give the very best chance for success, success without paying a heavy price in blood.”⁸⁹ Burns was committed to producing the best plan to support this vision for every task his corps was assigned. He wanted to preserve the life and health of the men he was responsible for while continuing to push the enemy out by force. This noble goal should have been broadcasted to all soldiers in the Canadian Corps, and it likely would have been well received and understood by them. But Burns was unable to relay this vision properly, and the message was not well grasped. He was aware of this weakness, remembering, “Looking back, I regret that I never had any instruction in public speaking—or thought that I needed it, until with seniority in rank I appreciated its importance.”⁹⁰ So great was his inability to personally communicate his goals to his troops that, in many instances, he left it up to his division and brigade commanders to deliver the message. Before the battle in which the Canadian Corps was to break through the Gothic Line, Burns gave Leese the opportunity to deliver the address as he felt Leese would do a better job. “Burns brought in Leese to address all 1st Canadian Corps officers down to the rank of lieutenant-colonel on the upcoming operation, and to explain the important part that the Canadians would play in it.”⁹¹ Burns understood, planned for, and possessed a clear

⁸⁹ Ibid., 150.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁹¹ Library and Archives Canada, Burns Papers, PWD, 22 August 1944.

understanding of the desired end state for his corps, but he was unable to communicate this to his soldiers.

Burns was well educated in the process (P) of planning military operations, and he was well versed in developing courses of action. As described by Hoffmeister, commander of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division working under Burns, “Burns really had done a good job of anticipating the requirements of the coming battle and getting the commanders and staffs working on them.”⁹² Planning for the I Canadian Corps’s upcoming battles in spring 1944 was a task Burns completed without hesitation once he had been made the corps commander. Leese had confidence in him and knew that Burns had talent, noting, “The Canadians under Burns are developing into a very fine Corps. He is an excellent commander and will, I feel sure, do well in battle. . . .”⁹³ Burns and his staff drew up the appropriate plans, and Leese approved them readily. “Burns prepared a solid skeleton appreciation for the upcoming operation.”⁹⁴ He had always been considered extremely intelligent, and planning was a strength he enjoyed.

Burns possessed the technical ability to plan and prepare, but motivating troops and influencing them was a key weakness in his leadership. His inability to encourage his troops was tragic; Hoffmeister stated, “What he lacked was the ‘poise and charisma’ to make people believe in him . . . he moved slowly, gave orders in a monotone manner and lacked enthusiasm to ‘sell’ the plan.”⁹⁵ His plans may have illustrated the best available courses of action, but if he was

⁹² Interview with Gen Bert Hoffmeister, 2 March 1992, Vancouver, J. L. Granatstein Fonds, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

⁹³ Leese to Kennedy, 16 April 1944, Alexander Papers, The National Archives, WO 216/168.

⁹⁴ Planning Notes: Operation “Honker,” Skeleton Appreciation by GOC 1 Cdn Corps, 11 April 1944, LAC, Burns Papers, PWD.

⁹⁵ Hoffmeister to McAndrew, 30 July 1986, McAndrew Collection, Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada.

unable to convince his followers of the plans' merits, it was all in vain. Perhaps part of the communication issue stemmed from the fact that Burns favored a more top-down approach to delivering the plan of action, preferring only small amounts of input by his subordinates.⁹⁶ One subordinate who knew Burns well explained Burns's inability to motivate troops in this way: "[It] would have been psychologically impossible for [Burns] to have stood on a jeep and address troops."⁹⁷ This personality flaw would later prove to be detrimental to Burns and his career.

There is little in the historical documents to support that Burns was a trustworthy (T) individual. Burns severely lacked this trait, and it is attributed mostly to his inability to communicate his good intentions to his soldiers. Vokes, working as the 1st Canadian Infantry Division commander under Burns, describes his lack of trust: "Unfortunately, Tommy Burns was not 'a member of the club.' He made no effort that I could see then to become a member of the Club. And I must say that half of one's military ability is bound up in one's ability to garner and hold a position of trust with one's pals and peers."⁹⁸ This speaks volumes about the lack of trust that most of Burns's peers and soldiers had in him. In addition, his superior officer, Gen McCreery, commented on his inability to gain their trust as well:

LGen Burns has not the attributes of a higher Commander. I find that he is indecisive, and appears to lack the grasp of the whole situation which is essential in battle, in fact he does not lead. . . . His manner is depressing, diffident and unenthusiastic and he must completely fail to inspire his subordinate commanders.⁹⁹

This criticism was a factor that resulted in Burns eventually losing his position as the Canadian Corps commander in November 1944.

⁹⁶ Notes on Interview with General Bert Hoffmeister, Vancouver, 2 March 1992.

⁹⁷ Interview with John W. H. Bassett, 5 June 1991, Toronto, J. L. Granatstein Fonds, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

⁹⁸ Vokes, *Vokes, My Story*, 158.

⁹⁹ McCreery to Alexander, 24 October 1944, Foulkes Papers, 73/1223, series 6, box 225, National Defence Headquarters Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Canada.

Although Burns had personality-driven weaknesses as a commander, he produced sound results, or change (C), and was rewarded for them. On 2 September 1944, after his Canadian Corps broke through the Gothic Line, Burns was awarded a Distinguished Service Order. An excerpt of the note of congratulations from Field Marshal Alexander to Burns reads,

Under yourself, the B.G.S. and the Staff at your Corps Headquarters controlled the battle well at every stage. I shall rely on their capacity to handle any larger operation entrusted to the Corps in the future. Indeed, in our next Operation the Canadian Corps has the decisive role . . . there are no troops in whom I place greater reliance than the Canadians for such an important task.¹⁰⁰

These words of praise are not to be taken lightly, and they demonstrate how well the Canadian Corps had performed, as well as the Field Marshal's great confidence in Burns's ability to produce results.

Although Burns achieved many successes with his corps, his time as a commander was quickly coming to an end. He had been the subject of an investigation in July 1944, prior to the I Canadian Corps being assigned a very important task—breaking the Gothic Line. Leese wished to quiet the rumblings he had heard of Burns's inadequate leadership. LGen K. Stuart, the General Officer commanding the Canadian First Army, carried out the interview and the results of this initial investigation showed that the division commanders under Burns had no problems with him, stating that they were “ . . . quite happy to go into the next operation under Burns and his present staff. They both hoped that I would speak to Burns regarding his manner and personality, and such was the only criticism I got from either of the Div Comds.”¹⁰¹ So it was that the division commanders under Burns agreed they were content to carry on and remain respectful and loyal

¹⁰⁰ Leese to Burns, 9 September 1944, LAC, Burns Papers, PWD.

¹⁰¹ Maj.-Gen Bert Hoffmeister's recollection of his interview with Stuart was that he had refused to say anything, repeatedly avoiding answers to Stuart's questions. “Why didn't Stuart have the guts to interview me in Burns' presence?” Interview, 2 March 1992. See also Vokes's account in *Vokes, My Story*, 183–4.

subordinates. After the successful battle that broke the Gothic Line wide open, there were repeated instances and examples of waning support for Burns from his division commanders. McCreery, the new commander of the Eighth Army, was unimpressed by Burns: “Burns was all but finished. No corps commander could have carried on with divisional commanders refusing direction and two army commanders after his head.”¹⁰² These sentiments led to another investigation, this time conducted by BGen E. G. Weeks, the rear echelon commander in Italy. Vokes and Hoffmeister both relayed their concerns to Weeks regarding the corps commander, and Weeks wrote,

On 16 Oct Hoffmeister informed me relationship with Burns was becoming intolerable. During recent ops Hoffmeister stated had lost all confidence in Burns. Gave as examples remarks at conferences tendency interfere forward commanders. Hoffmeister found himself in spite best intentions inclined to be insubordinate to Burns with result Hoffmeister feels that either he or Burns should be relieved . . . relationships between Burns and Vokes becoming intolerable.¹⁰³

These interviews resulted in Burns being relieved as the commander of I Canadian Corps on 10 November 1944. Successful in battle, Burns remained unsuccessful in building relationships between himself and his subordinates, causing the end of his command as a battlefield leader.

Burns provides an example of a commander gifted in some areas but severely lacking other vital leadership elements. He used the dissatisfaction (D) resident among his troops and, together as an all-Canadian Corps, they worked hard to drive out the enemy forces. Burns understood that a good vision or model (M) was important when acting as a commander, but he was unable to communicate this vision effectively. It was apparent that he was pressured from

¹⁰² Delaney, *Corps Commanders*, 119.

¹⁰³ Montague to Murchie and Stuart, 4 November 1944, quoting cable W125, Weeks to Montague, Crerar Papers, vol. 4, file 958C.009 (D178). See Alexander Interview (1949), Sidney Matthews Collection, USAMHI, OCMH, World War II Mediterranean, pt. II, 16, for an interview with Alexander while he was governor-general in Canada that discusses the Burns affair. Vokes’s final comment on Burns was: “I always liked Tommy, the man. I never liked Burns, the general.” *Vokes, My Story*, 181.

superiors to accomplish many tasks. He excelled at the operations planning process (P), creating effective and innovative solutions to ensure successful outcomes for his corps. Most glaringly, however, Burns did not have the trust (T) of his soldiers, subordinates, peers, or superior officers. This eventually led to the demise of his career as a commander. Examining Burns and his abilities as a commander using Beer's model shows the necessity of adding trust to the existing algorithm. Without it, Beer's model cannot explain Burns's successes and failures in his role as a commander.

Burns had failed as a commander because he could not properly communicate his good ideas and intentions to his soldiers. When he attempted to do so, the message was not well received, misconstrued, and displeasing to its recipients. Although Burns was successful in most tasks assigned to him as the I Canadian Corps commander, reflecting on how much more could have been done, and the increased quality of these tasks, leaves much to the imagination. If Burns had been able to motivate, inspire, and communicate effectively, the Canadians may have been a more efficient and effective fighting force.

Conclusion

In November 1944, the Canadian Corps was under new leadership. Lieutenant General Charles Foulkes was tasked with continuing the advancing drive in Italy and liberating the various towns and villages along the way. The Canadians were successful, and, by January 1945, Allied command decided the corps would depart the Italian Front and join the rest of the Canadian Army on the Western Front in Holland.¹⁰⁴ The Italian Campaign was considered an overall success by the Allies, and the Canadian Corps could account for a part in the completion of this task. During this campaign, three prominent general officers—Hoffmeister, Vokes, and Burns—left significant impressions and lessons for today’s leaders to contemplate.

After the war, Hoffmeister “happily resumed his pre-war duties as husband, father and businessman.”¹⁰⁵ He had learned valuable leadership lessons from his wartime duties but preferred a peaceful civilian life after all of the fighting he endured. He remained successful in business and lived to the age of 92. Vokes was posted to the Western Front in Holland as the 4th Canadian Armoured Division commander in November 1944 at the same time that Burns was replaced as corps commander. At the end of the war, Vokes was named commander of the Canadian Army Occupation Force and remained in Europe long after the war was over. After more than six years abroad, he was finally posted back home to Canada as the general officer of Central Command. He was posted to Western Command in Edmonton where he enjoyed the outdoors and eventually retired in 1959. There is little written of Vokes after his military career.

Burns was sent to Northwest Europe after he was fired as the I Canadian Corps commander and was assigned to oversee the rear echelon units in the 21st Army group until the

¹⁰⁴ Burns, *General Mud*, 223.

¹⁰⁵ Delaney, *The Soldiers’ General*, 227.

end of the war.¹⁰⁶ Burns spent his postwar years working at the Department of Veterans Affairs, then as Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs. After this, he was given the post of Chief of Staff for the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization, a military observer force for the supervision of a truce between Israel and the Arab States.¹⁰⁷ He wrote various articles as well as his autobiography, all well read and respected works of literature. He became an advisor to the Canadian government on disarmament and Chair of Strategic Studies at the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University in 1967. He was admitted to the Order of Canada and received the Pearson Medal of Peace from the United Nations Association in 1981.¹⁰⁸ Burns lived out his life as a respected member of both the Canadian Forces and the Canadian public and used his talents to serve his country, just as he pledged to do after he was relieved as the corps commander in 1944.

These three prominent and respected Canadian general officers demonstrated different examples of leadership. Each had their own respective way of influencing the behavior of those around them. When only employing Beer's model ($D + M + P = C$) to analyze their leadership attributes, it is difficult to understand their successes or failures until the extra element of trust is added to the equation. For example, Burns fulfilled all of the elements of Beer's model ($D + M + P$) but he was unsuccessful in influencing behavior, or creating effective change, as a corps commander. If the element of trust is added, it would explain his demise as a commander. Similarly, Vokes lacked planning skills and the ability to present a clear vision to his subordinates, but he possessed charisma and worked at earning trust and making those around him comfortable in his presence. Thus, $D + M$ (weak) + P (weak) + T (strong) = effective change.

¹⁰⁶ Delaney, *Corps Commanders*, 120.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 121.

This combination of qualities allowed trust to overcome the deficiencies in these other domains.

As Douglas Delaney writes,

Human skills matter. Corps, like any other army organization, are composed of people and it takes more than technical skill to carry them through the confusion and terror of combat. Successful commanders prepare their people for their task, but they also convey confidence and attract affection.¹⁰⁹

It was Hoffmeister who showed all of the attributes of successful leadership as he was genuinely admired and respected by his troops, and he demonstrated effective and successful battlefield command. The key to success for Hoffmeister during his leadership was trust.

When discussing trust, it is important to expand its scope to include the confidence to accept risk. When subordinates trust their leader, they are confident enough in the leader and his or her abilities to accept and mitigate personal risk in meeting responsibilities. Similarly, a leader trusts a subordinate to fulfill tasks assigned, and the leader must have greater confidence that the tasks will be completed without fail or else trust in the relationship would not exist. Lawrence Freedman relates, “The essence of trust was to knowingly and willingly accept a degree of vulnerability, aware that trustees might intend harm but finding it more profitable to assume that they did not.”¹¹⁰ Trust is essential in leadership. It can be argued that, without trust, leadership will become null and void. Trust in a military leader is essential as the job entails leading troops into harm’s way. As the risk of dangerous tasks increases, trust must increase at the same rate in order to avoid a lack of confidence between leader and follower.

Trust is an essential element in successful military leadership. Leadership strategies must include formal training and familiarization on trust in every military officer’s career. Because trust is essential to a successful command experience, it should be taught that invoking this

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 597.

leadership trait is essential for subordinates to accept risks and follow willingly into places that may be undesirable. If Beer's model is used to teach future leaders, incorporating trust— $D + M + P + (T) = C$ —will make it a more accurate tool to develop successful military leaders.

Burns failed, not because of the variables in Beer's model, but because he could not build and maintain good relationships. He could not foster a trusting environment with superiors and peers alike. In his autobiography, Vokes referred to Burns's inability to socialize and connect with peers and subordinates in a variety of settings. Perhaps some formal or informal mandatory team-building exercises would have helped Burns overcome this inability and gain acceptance into a trusting social network. Training military leaders how to trust and be trusted is a difficult task as this trait is heavily driven by individual personality types. Ethics courses can help leaders understand why honesty and trustworthiness are essential to positive leadership outcomes, but this may not be sufficient. Team-building activities and exercises promoting effective communication may assist in developing trust between peers and leaders. Simply highlighting and increasing awareness of the importance of trust in military relationships could improve military leadership. As well, social activities and informal gatherings are useful tools in building relationships and maintaining esprit de corps. Finding a common enemy and working through strategies to gain victory over this enemy is a quick method of team building and can initiate trustworthy relationships.

The task of initiating, maintaining, and exercising a trustworthy relationship is very difficult in our modern society. As indicated by the AP poll, trust has never been lower among humans, and this is concerning for military leadership; trust is essential and can be the sole reason for the demise of a task, operation, or large military exercise. It is essential for leaders today to become aware of this importance and find new ways to build trust throughout the ranks in order to develop an effective fighting force.

Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerras's report, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army*

Profession, examines the lack of honesty within military leadership and all ranks of the Army.¹¹¹ It advises that “untruthfulness is surprisingly common in the U.S. military even though members of the profession are loathe to admit it”¹¹² and raises concerns over this alarming issue. The authors assert that “The Army profession rests upon a bedrock of trust.”¹¹³ Young leaders are imitating examples of dishonesty, and the problem is deeply inbred and has infected Army culture. Wong and Gerras offer three suggestions to improve dishonesty within the Army: acknowledge the problem, exercise restraint, and lead truthfully. These are three valuable—but difficult—solutions for leaders to follow.

Trust is not a commodity that is easily bought and traded; it takes time to build and is extremely fragile. It can be lost in an instant if it is not respected. In the Army concept of modularity, troops are expected to be trained the same way and to take on various roles interchangeably, all as part of a building block set of a brigade or division. Trust is not developed within a unit of troops until they have had time to learn, train, sleep, eat, suffer, and thrive together. Trust must come from good examples and good mentors, from good leaders who understand the human element of influencing behavior. Then, and only then, will Army leadership produce efficient and effective warriors.

¹¹¹ Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press, 2015).

¹¹² Ibid., ix.

¹¹³ Ibid., x.

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